

REMARKS

Claims 32-38 and 40-50 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over United States Patent No. 4,462,508 to *Grafius*. Claims 32-38 and 40-55 have been cancelled and replaced with new claims 56-96 including independent claims 56 and 93. Support for these new claims can be found throughout the specification.

Regarding United States Patent No. 4,462,508 to *Grafius*, an apparatus 10 for aligning and feeding elongated objects 100 is disclosed. The *Grafius* apparatus 10 includes an untangler 20 that feeds elongated parts 100 such as electronic components having bent electrical leads into a vibratory bowl 40. The vibratory bowl 40 rotates providing centrifugal force to the elongated parts 100 aligning the elongated parts 100 on an outer wall of the vibratory bowl 40. The elongated objects 100 are lifted upwardly by a ramp 43 and ejected through an input end 45 falling into an escape chute 70 and onto a spur gear 80. The spur gear 80 rotates around a horizontal axis depositing the elongated objects 100 onto a conveyor belt 90. Additionally, a damaged elongated object 100 having a lead bent beyond a usable orientation is ejected from the vibratory bowl 40 through a second incline 47 and out of the vibratory bowl 40 through escape chute 70.

Notably, *Grafius* fails to disclose a supply system for providing fastening elements having a plurality of interchangeable modules, comprising a sorting device and a transport device, that interacts with a base module, comprising a forwarding device, where the interchangeable module is connectable to the base module so that the sorting device of each interchangeable module is positioned to receive fastening elements from the forwarding device as recited in independent claim 56. Therefore, because the *Grafius* apparatus 10 merely includes a single untangler in a fixed relationship to a vibrating bowl for orienting an elongated element, such as a photoelectric sensor, the *Grafius* apparatus 10 does not provide the flexible manufacturing process recited with the supply system of independent claim 56. Therefore, new independent claim 56 is believed allowable over United States Patent

No. 4,462,508 to *Grafius*. Additionally, dependent claims 57-92 include each and every limitation set forth in independent claim 56. Accordingly, applicant respectfully submits dependent claims 57-92 are believed allowable over *Grafius*.

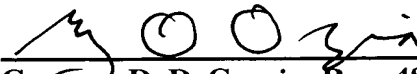
Furthermore, new independent claim 93 recites a method of operating a supply system for providing elements to a user having a forwarding device and a sorting device only permitting elements having a predetermined position to pass to a transport device, and where a basic module including the forwarding device is removed from an area of the basic module and replaced with an interchangeable basic module meeting change requirements of the user. As stated above, *Grafius* merely discloses a stationary untangler used for sorting photoelectric sensors providing no ability to replace the untangler with an interchangeable untangler to meet new requirements of the user, such as, for example, a tool. Therefore, new independent method claim 93 is believed allowable over United States Patent No. 4,462,508 to *Grafius*. Additionally, dependent claims 94-96 include each and every limitation set forth in independent claim 93. Accordingly, applicant respectfully submits dependent claims 94-96 to be allowable over *Grafius*.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the application, as amended, is now presented in condition for allowance, which allowance is respectfully solicited. Attached are checks in the amount of \$420.00 as payment for the two-month extension fee and \$306.00 for the additional dependent claims as required by the filing of this Amendment. The Commissioner is authorized to charge our Deposit Account No. 08-2789 for any additional fees or credit the account for any overpayments regarding this Amendment.

Further and favorable reconsideration of the outstanding Office Action is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

HOWARD & HOWARD ATTORNEYS, P.C.

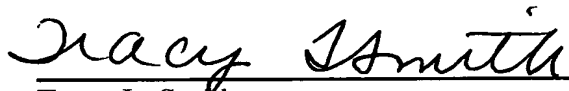


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CERTIFICATE OF EXPRESS MAILING

I hereby certify that the enclosed **Amendment** is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as Express Mail, postage prepaid, in an envelope as "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee," Mailing Label No. **EL998311106US** and addressed to **Mail Stop Fee Amendment**, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450 on **March 22, 2004**.



Tracy L. Smith